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Joint written statement* submitted by CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status, the Arab NGO Network for Development, a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Human rights conditions in Yemen*

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), the Yemen-based Human Rights Information and Training Center (HRITC) and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation welcome Yemen's cooperation and positive engagement with its Universal Period Review (UPR) examination on 29 January 2014. While we commend the government's acceptance of all 166 recommendations received during its review, we urge the government to ensure the full realization of these explicit commitments by adopting and implementing related legislative measures and policy reforms at the national level.

During Yemen's examination, continued restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were raised by a number of governments. The freedoms of peaceful assembly, association and expression which are fundamental to civil society serve as crucial facilitating rights to ensure the exercise of other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Their indivisibility and interrelatedness with other human rights act as an imperative barometer of a state's respect for the full gamut of rights.

In line with recommendations accepted by Yemen, we urge the government of Yemen to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society in accordance with the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights. Accordingly, the ongoing persecution of journalists and writers for discussing sensitive political issues and exposing corruption must immediately cease. The government must take proactive steps to end the pervasive culture of impunity by ordering prompt, impartial and independent investigations into all cases of attacks, harassment and intimidation of civil society activists and journalists.

During its UPR examination, Yemen accepted a number of recommendations to reduce poverty and address acute unemployment. Currently, nearly 54% of Yemenis live below the poverty line and the unemployment rate stands at 40% and over 60% among youth. However, the 2014 Yemeni budget allocates more than 3.5 billion USD for defense and security purposes compared to approximately 1 million USD for the Ministry of Human Rights, and around 500,000 USD to the ministries of education and health combined. We remain concerned that this vast discrepancy in resource allocation will undermine the government's ability to effectively realize these rights. Moreover over dependence on oil as major source of income restricts government's ability and necessitates prioritizing economic diversification and supporting productive sectors.

Similar to its UPR review in 2009, Yemen's examination during the second cycle witnessed a strong focus on advancing women's rights. Approximately 50% of women continue to suffer from domestic violence in Yemen and while the Gender Inequality Index ranks Yemen 148th out of 187 countries, the 2012 Global Gender Gap Report list Yemen as the "the worst" in gender disparities in economic, political, education- and health-based crite .a. In order to address these and other unwarranted restrictions on fundamental women's rights, we call on the government to ensure the genuine implementation of national policies on education and healtl in line with Yemen's obligations under CEDAW.

Although the government of Yemen made commitments to provide universal primary education during its UPR examination and despite the existence of several national strategies coordinated by Ministry of Education, the situation in Yemen remains bleak, with illiteracy rates at 62.1%. In addition, gender-based discrimination continues to undermine the universal enjoyment of the right to education, with female illiteracy rate standing at 70.2% compared to 29% for men. Accordingly, we call on the government to prioritize measures to tackle high illiteracy rates for girls in Yemen by criminalizing child marriage and adopting and implementing the Child Rights Law setting the minimum age of marriage at 18.

Despite the government's acceptance of all recommendations regarding the right to health, the poor quality of health services and limited financial and human resources earmarked for the sector continue to subvert the full enjoyment of this right. In Yemen, under-five mortality rate stands at 77 per 1000 live births while 58% of children under 5 suffer from stunting. Moreover, due to limited access to maternal health care, Yemen's maternal mortality rate, while witnessing a downward trend, remains high, with 365 maternal deaths per 100,000. We call on the government to

allocate greater and effectively managed resources to the health sector to increase the quality of services and to ensure availability and accessibility for all Yemeni citizens.

While we welcome the government's submission of a draft law on the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution, we urge the government to ensure that the NHRI complies fully with the Paris Principles. We further call on the government to substantively and regularly consult with independent national civil society groups in this process.

Finally, following the government's recent decision to institute a federal structure of governance, we urge the government to ensure that Yemen's international human rights obligations remain a stalwart pillar of the federal system. We further call on the government to ensure that the proposed constitution clearly provides for adequate protection of human rights at the federal, regional and local levels.

In accordance with its obligations under the international human rights treaties, we call on the government of Yemen to effectively monitor the implementation of all recommendations accepted during its second UPR review in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders including civil society organizations.

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* Human Rights Information and Training Center NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.